



THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

The Only Publication authorized by the Hon. W.F. Cody (BUFFALO BILL)

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 7.

Price, Five Cents.

BUFFALO BILL'S PHANTOM ARROW

OR
THE GHOST DANCERS' DOOM



BY
THE AUTHOR OF
'BUFFALO BILL'

Dec 7 1890
GEO. MADISON & WASHINGTON STS. 45 S. HALSTED ST., CHICAGO, ILL.

them as OF SMOKE DARTED FROM THE MUZZLE OF BUFFALO BILL'S RIFLE, AND THE WHITE HORSE WAS SUDDENLY CHECKED IN HIS WILD CAREER.



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NEW YORK, June 29, 1901.

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BUFFALO BILL'S PHANTOM ARROW;

OR,

The Ghost Dancers' Doom.

A STORY OF REDSKIN SUPERSTITION.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

FRIENDS AND FOES.

The wintry night was just closing in when a man, mounted on a tired horse, rode into a small town on the outskirts of border civilization, not a great many miles from the famous Bad Lands, where the dusky children of the government were gathered, indulging in the ghost dance, the excitement of which must result in open conflict with the whites.

As this horseman reached the edge of the settlement, he was surprised to hear the sharp click of a gun, followed by the quick question

"Halt! Who goes there?"

Big Foot, the fierce chief of the hostile Sioux, was

known to be a desperate fighter, and if war should be declared, he would strike hard and fast before General Forsyth could interfere.

Hence, at this particular time, guards were posted to prevent a surprise, and it was upon an outpost the traveler had chanced.

The light was fast disappearing from the gray wintry sky, but enough remained to show him the features of the party who stepped out of the bushes, gun in hand.

"Unless my eyes deceive me, I've seen that face before. Dakota Dan, how are you?"

The guard gave a cry, caught hold of the rider's leg, and looked up into his face.

"Am I dreaming, or is it his ghost? William Cody, speak out, is it you in the flesh?"

"As true as preaching, Dan. Shake hands."

"With all my heart. God bless you, Buffalo Bill. It is good for sore eyes to see you. What brings you here at this time?"

The celebrated army scout grew grave.

"This crazy ghost dance business is exciting our old friends among the Sioux, and unless stopped at once there will be battle flames run along our fair land, such as were never known before."

"Buffalo Bill, you have come to stop it?" exclaimed the other, eagerly.

"I have come to try," returned Bill, modestly; "whether I shall succeed or not depends upon circumstances; but I'm afraid the reds are in no state to listen to advice."

"You're just right there, old comrade. I've seen some of their ghost dances, and I swear such a crazy set never shook a foot. The reds are mad, because the agents cheat 'em, and now this Messiah business is putting 'em in great shape for being wiped out, for you know that's what General Miles will do with 'em if he ever gets started."

"Too bad. I thought we had had our last Indian war on the plains. Dan, who's at the bottom of this business?"

"What makes you believe I know?"

"Because I remember you of old. Besides, you tell me you've been up in the Bad Lands—that you've seen more than one of these ghost dances. Now, who's responsible for the state the reds are in?"

"You want to lay the blame on one man?"

"If it can be done, Dan."

"Look back a dozen years. Do you remember a man you found stealing in camp on the Brule—and whose ears were nailed to a scrub oak as a warning?"

"Let me see—that was one Jack Horner—I remember him as a slick scoundrel, and Jack of all trades—lawyer, school teacher, teamster, guide, gambler and thief. Do you mean to say he's yet alive?"

"Very much so. Truth to tell, Cody, it was the biggest mistake of your life that you did not put a bullet through his miserable carcass."

"Explain, Dan."

"Why, bless your soul, Big Chief Bill, that man is the main cause of all this excitement among the reds. By trickery he has become a big gun among 'em, and they look on him as the Messiah."

At this, Buffalo Bill uttered an exclamation.

"Then it was a big mistake on my part. Perhaps the opportunity may come for me to remedy my bad judgment. But I must go into town, secure a fresh mount, transact a little business, and be off by morning."

"I'll go with you, Bill, sending out some one to take my place here."

"Glad to have your company, Dan."

The settlement was a mining town among the hills which, thirty years previously, had hardly been visited by a white man, except some daring trapper.

Lights had flashed up here and there. Voices could be heard. Laughter and rude song made one hesitate to believe there was much fear of a threatened Indian uprising.

A company of cavalymen had reached the camp on their way to Pine Ridge Agency, and the citizens were making merry over them.

At one end of the town the campfires of the soldiers could be seen, and a crowd had gathered there.

Dakota Dan led his comrade into the settlement, and the news of Buffalo Bill's coming flew around like wildfire.

He was soon surrounded by an eager throng, and among them were a number of old comrades, and so good was his memory of incidents and faces that in no instance did he fail to recollect the circumstances connected with each name.

As soon as he could consistently do so, Buffalo Bill broke away from the boys and sought the cavalry camp.

In the officer in charge he found an old and tried friend, with whom at another time he would have enjoyed a long talk, but this must be deferred until another time.

Dakota Dan had secured a fresh mount for the famous scout, and it was agreed that they should start an hour after midnight. The moon would be well up then, and they could make fair progress across the plains in the direction of the Indian camp.

Something else required the attention of the scout.

Already Dan had posted him, and when he bade the captain of the cavalymen good-night he walked along until he came to where a blaze of light showed him one of those gambling dens, the most prominent spots in a mining town.

Many people were within, but they paid little heed to those who came and went.

Cody glanced around him, and his keen eye alighted upon a certain individual at a table near by.

This man wore his hair long, and had all the marks of a plainsman—he seemed to stake his money with a feverish eagerness that marked the born gamester.

When he had made sure of the man's identity, Buffalo Bill walked up behind him and laid a hand on his shoulder.

With a frown the gamester looked up.

No sooner did he behold the other man than upon his face there flashed a look of wonder, amazement, alarm and deadly fear commingled.

"I have come—are you ready, Rusie?"

The man could not control his voice for a minute—then he expressed his surprise at finding the scout present, when he was believed to be far away.

"Are you ready, Rusie?" persisted Cody.

"As you say," stammered the other.

"Then come with me."

The gamester swept his little pile of money into his pocket and followed.

It was evident that he feared Cody—there was something in the past that made him a slave.

Curious looks were now cast upon them, for the news had flashed around that Buffalo Bill was in the place.

Unheeding their looks, the scout strode outside, followed by Rusie.

Once alone, Cody allowed the other to gain his side before he spoke.

"You are surprised to see me, Rusie?"

"I should say so."

"Then you failed to get my letter."

"I haven't heard from you for years."

Cody mused a minute or two.

"I found out you were here by accident, and wrote you before I started, but I reckon I must have beaten Uncle Sam's mail. You remember your promise, Rusie?"

"I've never forgotten."

"The time has come to redeem it."

"Good—I stand ready. You saved my child once, Buffalo Bill, and I swore to do anything you ever asked me. That child is gone now; but my promise holds good."

"You and Big Foot, the Sioux chief, were great friends in the past."

"We were like brothers."

"He would do much for you."

"I believe it."

"You know he is now the leader of the young bucks who are disposed to be ugly—indeed, I understand that Red Cloud, and even Two Strike, can hardly keep their young men from running to join the forces of Big Foot."

"You have been away, Chief Bill, but it is as you say."

"I want you to go to Big Foot and use all your influence to prevent an outbreak, which must surely result badly for the reds."

"I will do it, Cody, but my chances of success are mighty small. You can't understand what a fearful hold this ghost dance business has upon the Indians all over the country. They're like crazy men, expecting the Messiah to give them power to wipe the whites off the earth."

"Yes, I know. Since reaching here I've heard news. You remember Dakota Dan?"

"Certainly. We meet once in a while."

"He tells me that this Messiah among the reds is no other than a man I should have shot years ago."

"Who was that?"

"Jack Horner. He is the main cause of this excitement. The reds call him their Messiah—he has worked upon their superstitious natures until they believe all he says."

"Then the way to bring peace would be to shoot Horner."

"My idea to a dot, and I'll carry it out if I'm given half a show, no matter if he's in the tepee of Big Foot himself."

"When shall I start?"

"Better wait until we start, Rusie."

"When will that be?"

"About three hours after moon up."

"I'll be ready, Bill. The time has come to pay my little Joe's debt, and you'll find Amos Rusie ready—but all the same, I have little hope of success. When I saw your face the old times flashed over me. Once again I could see you tear the boy from the mad hand of that Arapahoe chief, just as he was about to hurl the lad over the precipice into the river. No wonder I looked queer. I felt glued to my chair, as if I'd seen a ghost."

"Remember—meet us on time, at the Red Cloud tavern."

"Who else will be there?"

"Only Dakota Dan."

The army scout walked away, his mind filled with

plans for the future, for the prospect looked stormy for the border, with the Indians ready to break over all restraint.

Cody, sauntering along the main street of this mining town, was suddenly made aware of deadly danger.

From the darkness on one side there suddenly came a flash of light.

Accompanying this was the sharp crack of a small revolver.

Buffalo Bill could feel the wind of the bullet as it whistled by within two inches of his head, even clipping a lock of hair in its passage.

CHAPTER II.

A DEED OF TREACHERY.

Buffalo Bill was always quick to act in an emergency, and he proved it now.

Hardly had the flash of the pistol come and gone than he was in the air, leaping forward with the spring of a panther.

The would-be assassin had little chance to either flee or send a second shot ere the Prince of the Plains descended upon the crouching figure disclosed by the flash of the revolver.

"Great Heavens! It is a woman!"

"Yes, and one you foully wronged in the past, Buffalo Bill!" came in fierce accents.

"You must be mistaken. I never wronged a woman knowingly in my life," returned the scout, earnestly.

"You shot Hank Hamilton."

"What! that desperado? Yes, I shot him while he was in the act of doing murder. And you?"

"I am his widow. Over his body I swore to have my revenge. My time will come. I thought it was here, but the accursed bullet failed me."

Buffalo Bill was pained, for a woman eager for his life was an unusual experience with him.

"I should very much dislike to harm a woman, but my life is worth something to me as well as to others, and, if pushed into a corner, I must defend myself. If you keep up this sort of business, you must be prepared to accept all the consequences."

"Bah! your talk doesn't frighten me, Cody. I have sworn to have your life, if the chance ever comes, and I will keep my vow."

"Very well. Good-night."

He released her hands and stepped back, not knowing but what she might attempt to use a stiletto upon him in the darkness.

As he walked away he trod upon the little revolver, which had been twisted from her hand, and, obeying an impulse, put the weapon in his pocket, though with all a plainsman's contempt for such a weapon—it was but a toy in his sight.

Repairing to the tavern, he sought to get a meal and a few hours' rest before starting out upon the long ride to the Indian camp.

Meanwhile Dakota Dan had seen about horses, and had his end of the business arranged.

It commenced to look as if they would have to travel in the rain, for the heavens were clouding over, and threatened wet weather.

At the appointed time Buffalo Bill came down to the tavern porch. Dan stood there.

"Where are the horses?" was the first thought of the scout, expressed in words.

"In a stable near by. I'll lead you there."

"Good. We'll meet Rusie at the place I appointed."

"You mean Amos?"

"Yes."

"Does he jine us, Bill?"

"For a purpose. He has more influence over the chief, Big Foot, than any other soul, and I hope to prevent war being declared."

"But Amos Rusie ain't generally goin' around doin' good—not that I knows on."

"He'll do much for me," replied Buffalo Bill, with a quiet emphasis.

"Most men would, you bet," said Dan, with sudden enthusiasm.

They found the horses, and Cody complimented his companion on securing him such a splendid mount.

"Now for Rusie."

When they reached the appointed rendezvous the other, also mounted, was waiting them.

"All is ready—let's be off, and success attend our efforts," said Cody.

They passed the pickets stationed without the town, and galloped away.

Looking back, Buffalo Bill noticed an unusual stir in the cavalry camp.

"Bless my soul! if it doesn't look as though the blue jackets were about to take wing," he said, for they could be seen mounted and dashing about.

"That's what it is," said Rusie, quietly.

"Tell us—you seem to know, Amos."

"A courier from General Forsyth came in—he's at the camp—and, as a battle is daily expected, every soldier in reach is ordered to report there."

Buffalo Bill gave a low whistle.

"It's no more than I expected. Some folks keep saying there's no danger, but I know better. No one understands the Indian character better than Bill Cody, and I've felt sure there was trouble in the air for some time."

"That's what brought you out here?"

"It's one thing, Dan. I hoped to act as peacemaker, for, you know, many of the reds have some respect for me."

This was said without egotism, and truer words were never spoken.

Leaving the border town behind them, they spurred along the prairie, heading almost due southwest.

The last sound that came to their ears was the clear note of the cavalry bugle sounding "boots and saddles."

It was a cheerless ride, too, for the wind blew at times with cutting emphasis.

When flurries of rain descended the drops were driven with such force that they felt almost like tiny bullets cutting the skin.

Thus hours passed, until Cody himself, riding alongside his companions, was the first to discover signs of an Indian village ahead.

"Cautiously," he said, aloud. "What have we here?"

They moderated their pace, but advanced boldly toward the lodges.

It was evident, even some time before they reached the outermost tepees, that an event of unusual importance was going on.

The strange notes of the tom-tom could be heard rising and falling in a weird and rather uncanny manner—voices also sounded at regular intervals, as though certain dancers could not restrain their enthusiasm.

"The ghost dance," muttered Buffalo Bill.

"No music in it—makes me shiver," declared Dakota Dan.

"We go in, then?" asked Rusie.

"Yes—follow."

The scout led the way to the center of the encampment.

Few squaws could be seen, as the hour was late—a few men lay by the fires smoking, but all the young ones had gathered about the central fire, where something out of the ordinary was being carried out.

At sight of three paleface horsemen thus coming uninvited and unannounced to their ghost dance, the Indians looked very sullen, and began to make threatening gestures.

The whites reined in their horses and looked on, filled with curiosity.

Buffalo Bill had seen and even taken part in horse dances, bear dances, corn dances, and similar amusements with the Indians, but never had he seen such a wild orgie as this.

The dancers, grotesquely clad, seemed to enter into the thing as though life and death were involved—their motions were singular, beyond all power of pen to portray, and the very music appeared to partake of the ghostly nature of the scene, for it was barbaric and weird.

With his experienced eye the famous scout of many a campaign saw that the Indians were worked up to a tremendous pitch.

Such an excitement he had never before known to exist among them.

"Well, what does my brother, Big Chief Bill, think of the young braves' dance?" said a voice beside him, and, looking down, the scout saw an Indian whom he knew to be a chief.

"Burnt Stick—can it be?"

"Ugh! many moons have gone since we saw the Buffalo killer in our midst. He is welcome."

Cody seized the outstretched hand—he had many friends among the Sioux, and not a few bitter enemies—this chief, Burnt Stick, he had once reckoned among the latter, and the sight of him was therefore not so pleasant.

Trouble was coming, Cody feared.

It really looked as though the whole border must be bathed in blood, for there was a combination among the tribes from the Red River of the North down to the Colorado—couriers rode from one reservation to another instituting the wonderful ghost dance, and arousing the war spirit in the breasts of the young bucks.

Although Cody shook hands with Burnt Stick, and conversed with him in a friendly way, he did not trust him.

Without reserve, he confessed that his mission to this part of the country was one of peace or war, as the Indians chose to decide.

The Indian character is peculiarly conceited, and Buffalo Bill played upon this trait—making out that he was just as much concerned for the settlers along the border as for the Indians.

Burnt Stick argued with him, endeavoring to get him to turn back—saying that already matters had gone thus far, and that his life might pay the penalty should he attempt to visit the hostile camp.

The truth was Burnt Stick meant to join the hostiles with his young men; he was for war, and only feared lest the influence of Buffalo Bill might prevent a battle.

At the first opportunity the scout turned to his two companions.

"Boys," he said, in a low tone, "these reds mean mischief. Keep your eyes open, and be ready to shoot and run at a second's notice. It's my opinion that the campaign may be opened right here."

They knew what he meant.

Burnt Stick would try to detain them, by his tongue if possible, and through force if necessary.

Meanwhile, it could be noticed that the young bucks gathered around them, as if in curiosity, but Buffalo Bill knew there was method in it.

CHAPTER III.

BUFFALO BILL'S FIGHT FOR LIFE.

There are times when strategy takes the place of force, and often wins the battle.

Such an occasion was now presented to the three men.

Should they become engaged with the bucks in the very center of the village, Buffalo Bill knew their chances of escape would be small.

Burnt Stick had upward of four score young bucks among his lodges, and these fighting men were now all at home.

Cody conceived a plan.

Turning to the chief, he began to ask questions as though it were his intention to turn back again toward the mining town.

Then he casually mentioned the fact that several companies of cavalry had started out after them, and must be near at hand.

It was really painful to notice the change that came over the war chief's face as he heard these things.

If this was the case, it would be poor policy to invite extermination then and there.

It seemed just as likely as not that the scout's presence meant the coming of soldiers.

Burnt Stick showed alarm.

Some signal must have been communicated to the young bucks, for they began to fall away in what appeared to be a sullen manner, as though they did not relish giving up a plan that had just been to their liking.

Cody saw that his plan had been successful, and that they were to be allowed the privilege of departing unmolested.

Of course, they would be followed, to make sure that they went in the direction of the settlements, and did not head toward the main camp.

In case of necessity, they could outrun those who pursued, or, turning at bay, give them a warm reception.

Burnt Stick had had his scouts out, and they reported the arrival of the cavalry troop at the mining town, so that he could see reason in all that the scout told him.

Buffalo Bill bade him a pleasant good-by, and expressed a wish that they should not meet face to face in a battle.

The three horsemen then rode out of camp as they had entered it.

Hardly were they beyond the village than the greatest confusion began to arise from among the lodges.

Buffalo Bill heard sounds that told him immediately what was up.

"Going in a hurry—lodges coming down—Burnt Stick means to be in at the death," he said.

Their attention was, however, taken up with other sounds that had a more personal interest—the trampling of horses' hoofs in their rear.

Just as Cody had expected, the Brule chief had sent a squad of his braves to see whether all he had said was the truth.

"Better a dozen than five score, I reckon," was the way Dan voiced their sentiments.

They could manage these fellows if it came to such a thing as an open rupture.

For a short time they kept on the line that, if pursued long enough, would bring them to the mining town again.

This state of affairs was hardly to the liking of the army scout.

When they had gone about a mile beyond the confines of the village he drew rein.

"This thing has gone far enough, boys."

Their pursuers came very near, and then the clarion voice of the great scout rang out:

"Halt! on your lives!"

The confused sound of a dozen horses being pulled up sharply could be heard.

Indistinctly they were able to see the Indians clustered in a squad near by.

Cody called out, demanding to know why their friends persisted in following them.

"There are many bad Indians about," was the ingenious reply, "and the chief, Burnt Stick, would protect his brother, Big Chief Bill, from harm."

"You know Buffalo Bill is able to protect himself. His rifle speaks many times, and death follows. Return to your lodges—follow me no longer, lest I may take you for bad Indians. We shall move on—if Burnt Stick's young men follow again, it is for trouble."

Long experience in the past had made him well acquainted with all the phases of Indian character.

These red rovers had to be handled without gloves. Buffalo Bill could use them as no other white man dared, for they feared him almost as much as they did the Evil Spirit.

True to his word, he again put his horse into motion.

Not knowing but what the Indians might take a notion to open fire upon them, they bent low in the saddle as they rode away.

Cody kept on the alert, for he was secretly of the opinion that the young Indians could not be so easily beaten from their game.

It was not long before his anticipations were more than realized.

The night wind bore to his ears the sound of many hoofs.

Buffalo Bill quickly unfolded his plan of action.

About half a mile ahead, Dan had told him, lay a strange ridge of limestone rocks, the presence of which upon the level prairie had puzzled many a man.

Here they would turn at bay, and get rid of their determined pursuers.

Burnt Stick's young bucks had been warned—let them take the consequences.

"Here we are. Hide the horses, and get ready."

His companions quickly obeyed orders, knowing that they were just the right thing.

The rush of advancing horses now sounded very close, and they could begin to see the outlines of the oncoming braves.

As if suspecting something of the truth, the Sioux warriors had separated while advancing, and no two were now side by side.

The moon peeped out at this moment, favoring those who crouched behind the rocks.

Buffalo Bill ran his eye along the line.

"Just a dozen of 'em, and up to their old tricks, Dan," he said, as every brave vanished from view, hanging down from the side of his steed.

"Never mind—you know what to do, boys. I hate to hurt good horseflesh, but, under the circumstances, it can't be helped."

Each man had poked his Winchester out, and stood ready to pump lead among the onrushing warriors, when their leader gave the word of command.

Cody gave one glance aloft, and saw that the moon had reached the rift in the clouds, and would presently pass behind the next bank.

"Now!"

With the order there came a quick report, followed by two others.

Then the affair was on.

The utmost consternation followed the fire.

Horses neighed, some falling, others dashing wildly away.

Whenever a glimpse was had of a human figure it was the signal for a shot.

Those who fired were men who could be accounted sharpshooters, and when they sent a bullet it was for a purpose.

Such an engagement could not last long.

There was a short confusion, and, as the moon veiled her face behind the clouds, the field seemed won, for there were no Brule braves dashing forward. A number of horses could be seen in full flight, but it was impossible to tell how many of these carried riders.

Buffalo Bill had given warning, and it had not been heeded.

Perhaps this was not the end.

Even then they might be stealing along on their hands and knees toward the line of limestone rocks, intent upon revenge.

"To the horses!" was Cody's low-spoken command.

He had a fear lest some one of the redskins might reach the animals before they did.

Sure enough, his suspicions were realized, for they turned the angle of the rocks just in time to hear a savage shout.

Then came a trampling of hoofs, and three horses went flying past.

Upon one was mounted an Indian, his hair streaming in the wind, while from his lips pealed forth shouts that would have alarmed any beast.

Quick as a flash, Buffalo Bill threw his rifle to his shoulder.

A shot, a shriek, and the horses, riderless, continued to dash wildly away.

Dakota Dan gave a shrill whistle, and no sooner did it sound than his animal stopped in its tracks, turned, and came toward them again, while the other two animals, like sheep following their bell-wether, changed their course, and once more returned to the rocks.

As the animals came up, Dan caught them.

His horse dragged something at its heels, and this proved to be the body of the young Brule buck who had played such a dare-devil game.

His foot had somehow become entangled in the stirrup, so that when he fell after receiving Cody's fire, he was dragged at the heels of the animal he had been stealing when shot.

Several braves leaped out from places of concealment, and sought to close with the three men.

Although Buffalo Bill's Winchester was empty, seizing it by the barrel, he swung it around his head with a fierceness that amazed them, and its execution was tremendous.

Buffalo Bill was in his element.

He forgot everything save that his blood was on fire—that savage foes had attempted his life, and he had a means of destruction in his hands.

Two sweeps of those powerful arms and the path was clear.

Unless more Indians appeared to bar their way, nothing now prevented them from escaping.

His horse pawed the rocks beside him. One leap and Cody was in the saddle.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DESERTED CABIN.

Buffalo Bill's comrades followed him, and the three urged their horses from the spot.

They were wise enough to bend low in the saddles, and thus escaped several bullets that went singing over their heads.

"That job's done," remarked Cody, as they lost sight of the limestone ridge.

"And well done, too," said Dan, chuckling.

"I reckon the chief will growl a little when he discovers what havoc we've made in the ranks of his warriors."

"One thing is settled—it opens the war."

"Yes, the reds are on the warpath. Big Foot's camp will perhaps open on the soldiers, and the border be lighted up with battle-fires more fierce than has been known these many years."

"We're in for it, then."

"I have a great faith in General Miles, and he may yet be able to avert a general war. If any man can, he will."

The words of the soldier-scout told that the Indian fighter, General Miles, was respected along the whole border by both red and white.

He was doing his best to prevent war, while at the same time taking every precaution to meet the emergency sternly, if it came.

Their course was now altered slightly, as Dan declared the camp must lie more to the west.

To make a short cut, they struck into the timber at one side of the trail.

Dakota Dan knew of a cabin near by, and toward this they proceeded, to warm their chilled bodies.

Dakota Dan led the way, and it was evidently not his first trip to this quarter, judging from the familiar manner in which he walked his horse under the dark branches of the trees.

In another minute they came to a small clearing and a cabin.

He threw himself to the ground.

"Here's the door—broken, too, but luckily on the south side of the house."

One by one they entered, leading the horses.

The cabin had but one room. This chanced to be a large one, however, and could easily accommodate their animals at one end.

Dan struck a match.

He found a piece of fat pine, and presently had a rude torch burning.

Wood lay in a pile, where the owner of the cabin had placed it before his flight.

How cheery the blaze seemed.

When warmth pervaded their systems, they sat down on the rude seats provided, to smoke and talk the situation over.

The wind would probably go down by morning, and they could proceed on their way in comfort.

Unless the state of affairs at the hostile camp was very critical, they could reach there on time.

Should the Indians have become worked up to a pitch of desperation, of course, no effort on the part of Buffalo Bill would prevent a fight.

"What are you looking at, Dan?" asked the soldier-scout, noticing the intent gaze which the old Indian fighter bent on the wall.

"Can't make out what that is up yonder."

Buffalo Bill directed his eyes to the quarter Dan had indicated.

"Looks like a placard. Suppose you pull it down and see."

Dan, with the scrap of cardboard—a remnant of a hat box—in his hands, bent over so that the light would fall upon it.

"Writing here, sure as ye live—red letters, too, writ in blood with a stick, I reckon."

Dakota Dan, however, spent some time in deciphering the notice.

"Great Cæsar!" he ejaculated at length. "This here's a go, now. Listen while I read it out to you, boys."

Then he slowly read:

"Trouble here—red devils at work—bound to break door down—already wounded—know what it means—have secret—Two-Strike has sworn to make me tell—prisoner—death. If this is found send word to Buffalo Bill."

"Is that all?" demanded Cody, who had received an

electric shock when he heard his name mentioned in the rude letter.

"That's the entire communication."

"No name signed?"

"He started to put one, but I reckon the red devils were beating the door down, and he had to put this up to turn and fight for his life."

"Dan, you had met this hermit squatter?"

"Yes—I knowed him."

"Tell me his name."

"Captain Andy Blake."

Cody gave an exclamation.

His thoughts traveled far back when this gallant soldier and himself had hunted together.

He shut his teeth savagely together.

"If harm has come to Andy Blake, I'll avenge him. You hear me, boys—mark it down."

"He must have heard you was coming," remarked Rusie, reflectively.

"Very likely. We were like brothers. Something seemed to weigh Andy's spirits down at times, and no doubt this same trouble caused him to throw up his commission in the army and take to the life of a hermit."

Dan said nothing, but Cody was eying him closely.

"When you visited Captain Blake, was he alone?"

At this Dan started.

He knew the other was watching his face.

"Colonel, I know that man's secret—discovered it by accident, when I helped him recover his child."

"Child—was Andy married?"

"Yes, and his wife ran away with a handsome devil. The same old story. He abused her. She fled to the Indians. Andy learned that his child was in the tepee of Two-Strike, the great chief of the Sioux. Together we stole the girl not more than six months ago. I took her to the settlement, and Andy stayed here to deceive them all, intending after a while to take his child to Mexico, and forget the past."

"He made a mistake."

"Looks like it," gloomily.

"Two-Strike has remembered. He has sent his braves here, and Captain Andy is gone."

"Kinder thought it looked like a fight had gone on in here when we entered—things were knocked around so."

"And the door hanging on one hinge."

"Look closer fer signs."

Dan picked up a fat pine torch from the fire, and holding it low down, started to examine the floor of the cabin.

"Blood stains in several places," he remarked.

"Just as likely to be left by the reds as Andy. How old are the signs, Dan?" asked Cody.

"Not over twenty-four hours, and I doubt if that long. The reds didn't kill him, else we'd find his body here. They carried off their own dead, I reckon, too."

Dakota Dan was thoroughly versed in border signs.

Buffalo Bill trusted in him implicitly, and never questioned any decision.

If Captain Andy was a prisoner in the Bad Lands, how could he be rescued.

One of Buffalo Bill's objects in coming was to prevent a general war by using his influence, not to precipitate such an affair.

At the same time he realized that after all he could do little with these Indians.

Let come what would, Buffalo Bill had declared his purpose to rescue his friend from the hands of the reds.

The three were debating seeking sleep until morning, when Dakota Dan sniffed the air, suspiciously.

"What's up—smell reds, Dan?"

"I always claimed that power, and by hokey, you see I was right."

As Dan spoke he wheeled and watched the door, holding his rifle in his hand.

A shadow flitted through the entrance.

It was an Indian, who advanced to the fire, and held his hands out to receive its warmth.

Another and another glided noiselessly after, until seven stood before the blaze.

The three white men saw that these were not the men of Burnt Stick's band, and understood that they could not have any knowledge of what had transpired.

Only one was a man of middle age, evidently a sub-chief.

They utterly ignored the presence of the three whites until they had warmed their chilled fingers. It was a rude way of appropriating a fire, but just at that time the reds were not giving a snap of the finger for anything white.

Perhaps they wanted to pick a quarrel.

Three scalps could be secured on the sly, and no one ever be the wiser.

"Well, Red Bear, this is a strange meeting."

As the soldier scout spoke, the middle-aged Indian started and looked toward him, with great astonishment.

"What! Big Chief Bill, is it you?"

Buffalo Bill shook hands with each of the braves in turn. The young bucks eyed him with the greatest curiosity, for they had heard much of this wonderful man.

Cody had kept a stern look on his face.

He had an idea that Two-Strike had sent them back to search the cabin for some clew to the child that had been stolen from his tepee.

The scout did not hesitate about putting this directly to them.

An Indian can lie unblushingly, and Red Bear at once denied all knowledge of the deed that had been so recently enacted.

If the hermit had been injured, it must have been at the hands of bad Indians. There were always certain bands of them prowling around like wolves.

As for himself and his comrades they loved the whites like brothers, and could not be tempted to dig up the hatchet.

All this was very fine, but Cody did not believe one word of it.

He had known Red Bear to lie before now, and with less of a purpose than animated his course on the present occasion.

The seven bucks showed no inclination to go, and they could not consistently turn them out, so it began to look as though all of them must occupy the cabin until morning.

One by one the Indians lay down upon the hard floor and seemed to lapse into sleep without waste of time.

Cody believed they were playing possum, and he meant to prove it, and under his instructions his comrades also lay down to sleep, their guns in their hands.

Cody was a man who seldom trusted an Indian, when there was any reason for believing the redskin might have a motive in acting a treacherous part.

No doubt it would be conducive to glory on the part of any Indian to possess the locks of the famous scout; but Buffalo Bill thought he had better use for his scalp, and declined to part with it without a struggle.

It lacked an hour or two of dawn, and at such a time weary men generally sleep the soundest.

The heavy breathing would indicate that all were

asleep, but this was far from the truth, since not a man slept.

All were alert, for a signal from their respective leaders warned them to be on their guard.

Buffalo Bill saw Red Bear move; he raised his head and gave a quick glance around him, and satisfied with what he had seen, the chief sat upright.

Then he lay back again.

A strange little chirp was heard—one might imagine it like a bird in the chimney.

Every Indian sat up, for it was the signal they were awaiting.

Buffalo Bill saw them creep together—some whispered consultation was going on.

Perhaps Red Bear, from motives of discretion, fearing the gallant soldier scout of old, endeavored to persuade his young men to be content with the horses.

More than one black look was cast in the direction of the recumbent forms, as could be seen by the flickering firelight.

How were they to get the horses out without alarming the three whites?

Once cast loose the animals would soon pass out through the open door, and could then be secured.

A brave glided forward to perform his part of the compact, but unfortunately he stepped too near the heels of Dan's horse, which had been taught to hate an Indian.

There was a sudden, startled cry, a heavy dull thud, and a whirling figure shot backward, landing against the further wall with a whack.

Up sat the three bordermen, each with his faithful Winchester covering a man.

The six Indians made no attempt at battle.

"No shoot, Big Chief Bill!" cried Red Bear, hastily throwing up his hands.

"You saved your braves from death, old man. We were watching and meant to lay you all out if you tried any mischief. The horse saved us from bothering with that chap."

"We think best go away—leave white men alone in cabin."

"Yes, and take our horses, a nice little game, Red Bear."

"That hot head boy, him no listen to reason. Me tell him he suffer. Good if neck broke."

The redskin was, of course, lying, as it had evidently been a set-up job to steal the horses.

"Good-night, Red Bear. Tell your braves the rifle of Buffalo Bill can shoot around a tree, and that if one bullet is fired at this cabin while we are in it, not one man of you will ever reach the camp of Two-Strike."

"Big Chief Bill, we do not want to do you wrong."

"Help that poor devil out with you—he is hardly able to hobble, you see."

The brave, who had been kicked by the Indian-hating horse, limped past, his face like a thunderbolt, and his scowls for the whites rather than the animal that had upset him.

Away they went, and at a word from Cody the fire was immediately extinguished.

In the darkness they crouched and waited.

The moon still shone, but it was impossible to tell whether their enemies had gone or not.

All they could do was to remain quiet and await the coming of dawn.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE ALERT.

The three men crouched there in the semi-darkness and waited.

The cabin of Andy Blake had one small window, and through this Buffalo Bill kept watch, while to the others he left the task of guarding the door.

They took turns in sleeping, and it was Cody's turn to stand watch, and from the position of the moon in the heavens, he judged that it must be three o'clock.

Looking out of the window, he suddenly became aware of a peculiar glow of light—it came and went in a few seconds, just like a meteor.

Then the scout heard a low thud, and approaching the window, he looked out. As it was on the shady side of the cabin there was really no danger of his being seen.

He could see no signs of Red Bear and his warriors.

So long a time had now passed since their departure, that it seemed they must have gone.

While he stood thus, his attention was arrested by what seemed to be a glowing star in the woods beyond the opening made by Andy Blake's clearing.

Even as he watched, this strange star suddenly shot up into the air.

There was a hissing sound that made Cody remember rockets, and it descended, and passed from his vision; again that mysterious thud.

"Bless their sweet lives, do they expect to ring that old game on us."

As he thus muttered he stooped down and gave the man nearest him a punch in the ribs.

"What's up?" whispered Dan.

"Wake Amos," replied the scout.

This was speedily done, and Cody said:

"There, see that!" as another blaze described a half-circle through the air, and landed upon the roof of the cabin.

"Fire-arrows on the roof," said Rusie.

"Even so," replied Cody, quietly.

"They mean to burn us out."

"Yes."

"And shoot us down while we run."

"That's the idea."

"Fiends take 'em! What d'ye move?"

"Seems to me I saw a bucket of water over in a corner yonder."

"Yes—an old leather bucket I found and scooped full of water at the spring."

"I believe there's a trapdoor above, but how to reach it is the question."

"Blake used a ladder."

"But where is it?"

"Hanging on the wall, I reckon."

"Try and see."

Success crowned Dakota Dan's work, for he found what he was looking after.

"Help me place it, Dan, for I'll go up and find the trap. Once open I can use the water to advantage."

The ladder was soon in position, and Cody crept up.

He used his hands to advantage, and at last discovered what he sought.

What he saw was not exactly alarming, but was enough to excite apprehensions, for the fire arrows had already started a blaze, as the roof was old, and fairly dry.

Cody said nothing as he descended the ladder, but when he picked up the pail of water and started to go up again, he remarked:

"If they shoot at me, boys, you might pump a few bullets in among 'em, just to seem social like, you know."

"We will, you bet," returned Dan.

To do the most good he would be compelled to lean partly out of the open trap, so as to distribute the contents of the bucket.

This would of necessity expose him to the fire of the Indians, for it could be set down as certain that they kept a sharp watch.

The moonlight, and the burning roof would together betray him, but he took the risk, and a fourth arrow fell upon the roof even as Cody reached the opening.

The bucket swept in a semi-circle, and its contents were evenly distributed over the surface where the fire burned, and every bit of fire was extinguished.

At the same moment a couple of shots sounded from the woods, and the bullets ripped up the roof close beside Buffalo Bill.

One pierced the leather pail, so if they wished to use it again the hole would have to be plugged up.

Dan had his eye on the spot where the shots came from, and acting under the instructions given by Cody, he sent a number of leaden messengers in that direction.

Whether they counted or not could hardly be told, but Dan was satisfied, for he had given the redskins to understand that they would meet with a hot reception.

The moon was setting, and this would leave about an hour of darkness, but that would be ample time for Red Bear to carry out some new diabolical scheme.

In a short time after darkness came, Amos Rusie gave a signal.

It was the chirp of a cricket, and it signified that the Indians had come and were on his side of the house.

Rusie, by a signal, brought Dan to his side.

"What would ye do?" whispered the ranger, as he discovered that Amos was silently opening the door.

"Teach the hounds a lesson," came back in a breath.

Dan could not say anything.

The man was well able to take care of himself, and besides, this sort of thing rather agreed with Dan's notions of business, and he crept out, yet could see really nothing.

Rusie chuckled gently to himself at the thought that the reds could not see him either.

He held his gun ready, and it was his intention to give the first who came along the benefit of its contents.

Sounds came to his ears, but hardly the ones which he hoped to hear.

The wind was souging through the branches of the trees, from within the lone cabin came the champing of the horses, as some steed showed his impatience.

In vain he listened for voices, and bent his ear to catch a footfall.

The Indians were near by, but he could not for the life of him decide what they were up to.

If bent upon trying some other plan for burning the cabin, they had as yet showed no sign, but Rusie was patient.

It had been the means of his success as a gambler in times past.

They say everything comes to the man who can bide his time, and it proved so in this case.

He heard no warning footstep, but suddenly a heavy body ran plump against him.

Rusie was on his guard.

He heard an involuntary grunt, for his elbow had dug the Indian in the ribs.

At the same moment he gave the fellow a shove to send him a yard or two away, judged his position, and then fired.

The roar of the gun was instantly followed by a shriek of human anguish.

Rusie had one glimpse of a human figure, by the flash of the gun, and he knew his lead had not been thrown away.

He immediately changed his position, not knowing what might follow.

Perhaps the Indians believed the last shot had been fired from the cabin.

Ah! what was that?

The reds must be bringing branches and putting them under the house.

It convinced the white man that they had not yet given up their idea of firing the house.

He took great satisfaction in listening to their movements, for now that they carried brush they could not help making some sounds.

Perhaps Red Bear and his men wondered why they were not fired on from the cabin.

When a sufficient amount of brush had been placed under and against the cabin, the Indians were ready to set afire.

At a signal a light flashed.

This was Amos Rusie's time.

He began to send bullets among the group of crouching redskins, who believed they were safe because so close to the cabin, and never dreamed of an enemy outside the cabin.

The utmost consternation ensued, and several of the reds were hit, while one fell dead.

As it happened, the lighted torch, falling among the dead twigs and leaves, started a fire.

Rusie did not hesitate.

Now that he had met and routed the Indians, he was just as ready to fight fire.

He rushed forward with loud shouts that must have added to the consternation of his foes.

Jumping upon the flaming wood, he trampled the fire under foot with furious haste, for it had secured a start, and in another minute or so would have been beyond control.

Not until the last spark had been extinguished did Amos Rusie cease his energetic work.

Perhaps the latter would now remember the words of Buffalo Bill to the effect that if the Indians tried any back-handed work not one of them should return to their tribe alive.

At any rate, what remained of the gang was so thoroughly demoralized that not a shot was fired at Rusie while he was engaged in trampling the fire under foot.

When he had done this he again crouched near by waiting.

Shortly before dawn, Amos heard movements, and made up his mind that the reds had come back after the dead.

As this was a mission of mercy, Rusie held his fire, and allowed them to carry it out.

At length the gray light appeared, and morning was at hand, and released from their cramped positions when day came on, the three men built a fire, beside which they ate their breakfast.

Buffalo Bill had taken a scout through the timber just at dawn, and when he came back later reported the coast clear, so it was without fear of ambush that they led their horses out, and once more started forward.

The day opened cool and dreary, and a long ride lay before them.

About the middle of the morning a horseman was discovered advancing at a gallop; when he came near enough they made him out to be a soldier.

The trooper had surveyed them from an elevation with a field glass before they even knew of his proximity, and finding that they were whites, had not hesitated to advance.

He recognized Buffalo Bill, although the latter did not know him, but said:

"You come from General Forsyth?"

"Yes, sir."

"Bound for Pine Ridge?"

"With dispatches for General Miles."

"How does the land lie in front, courier?"

"Things looks squally, sir. The bucks are like crazy men, filled with religious excitement over the ghost dances and the Messiah that has come among them. I'm afraid there will be blood spilt very soon. If you were there, your influence might keep them in check."

"No," returned the scout, sadly, "it was that idea which brought me here, but I have had my eyes opened. The old chiefs can control the squaws and old men, but all the young bucks care nothing for Buffalo Bill or his counsels. If they want war, give 'em all they care for—that's the only way to cure hot-blooded Indians."

"I must go on. Have the cavalry moved yet?"

"Yes, they are on the way. When do you look for trouble at the earliest?"

"When the troops arrive. I understand it is the general's idea to search the lodges for concealed arms, and you know as well as I do, Chief Cody, that means blood—the Brule bucks won't stand it."

Buffalo Bill said no more, and the trooper made a military salute, wheeled his horse, and dashed away.

"A likely young fellow," remarked Dan.

"Not so very young, either—it's the smooth face as deceives ye. Reckon he's forty if a day," declared Rusie.

"All I hope is that he won't fall in with any wandering bands of reds. From the spirit they've already manifested toward us, I'm under the impression they stand ready to gobble up any stray blue-jacket," said Cody.

"Yes, if he runs foul of the man we whipped at Limestone Rocks, I'm afraid General Forsyth will be short one courier," Dan responded.

"Well, I'm puzzled."

They could see that from the way Bill acted, but said nothing, believing he would presently tell all he had to say.

"Yes, I'm in a hole, boys. Which course shall I pur-

sue, that's the question. I'm eager to save my old friend Captain Andy before the war becomes general, and at the same time feel as though we ought to make for the hostiles' camp."

No one ventured a word, and Buffalo Bill went on, reflectively:

"We are here just on the border of the Bad Lands. From what I have heard, Dan, you are at home there."

"I admit that."

"Can you take us to Two-Strike's camp?"

"Yes."

"How long will it be?"

"Twenty hours, with good luck."

"That is fair enough. The conflict won't come off for a couple of days. We will have ample time to do our work."

"I'm with ye," said Rusie.

"And count me in, Buffalo Bill," cried Dan.

"This is like you, boys, and I won't forget it. I hope we'll succeed and get Andy away by fair means or foul. Take the lead, Dan."

They swung along with surprising evenness during the remainder of the day.

Here and there they came to rocky gulches, which were crossed with difficulty, and one of these Dan took advantage of, and made several miles along its rocky bottom.

On a certain hill, Indian pickets were kept posted day and night.

By taking advantage of the deep ravine, they managed to pass this picket post without being seen.

This was one of Dakota Dan's dodges.

By this time their horses were becoming somewhat tired, but Dan cared little for that, for fresh ones could be secured at the Indian village, whither they were heading.

Could they have had the benefit of a few more hours they would have reached the village, but Dan had taken into consideration this period of darkness when he spoke of twenty hours.

If the moon came out he believed they could reach Two-Strike's lodge ere morning.

Down in a gulch a small camp-fire was built, and supper was cooked.

The danger of discovery was slight, and the comfort derived from the blaze immense.

The trooper had surveyed them from an elevation with a field glass before they even knew of his proximity, and finding that they were whites, had not hesitated to advance.

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If the moon came out he believed they could reach Two-Strike's lodge ere morning.

Down in a gulch a small camp-fire was built, and supper was cooked.

The danger of discovery was slight, and the comfort derived from the blaze immense.

Fortunately the horses found some clippings of grass under the banks, and at this they cropped eagerly.

Buffalo Bill threw himself upon the ground, and in a minute was asleep.

Tough old Dakota Dan did not sleep, but crawled up the steep, and stretched himself upon the bank at a place where some long grass screened him.

The small fire gleamed below, and he could make out the forms of his two companions lying on either side.

His position was an admirable one for a picket, and although not nearly so comfortable as a place at the camp-fire below, Dan determined to hold out for a time at least.

A movement near him attracted his attention.

A man crept by—Dan could just see him by the light of the stars, as he drew near the edge of the canyon.

Watching him eagerly, he soon had a chance to see the other's face, for the little fire threw a certain amount of light upward.

The man was repulsive in looks—he had the appearance of a desperado—a human rattlesnake.

For a time he gazed downward and then made a movement with his gun as though about to make use of the weapon.

Dakota Dan waited no longer.

He made a spring, grappled the spy, and the two rolled down the bank locked in each other's arms.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SECRET OF THE CAVE.

The two men rolled down to the very bottom of the canyon, where they brought up with a turn, not ten feet away from the fire.

The racket was enough to arouse even sounder sleepers than Buffalo Bill and Amos.

Jumping to their feet they were just in time to see the strange ending of the double descent.

Cody realized what was the matter, and was beside the two figures in a second, while he clapped his revolver against the head of the rough-looking man with whom Dan was wrestling.

"Let him go, Dan, I've got a shooting-iron clapped against his brain-box."

The latter understood, and immediately gained his feet, while his late antagonist remained flat upon the ground.

"Get up," commanded Buffalo Bill.

The fellow obeyed.

The scout read him at a glance.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"What's that to you?" replied the other, insolently.

"Nothing much, but I thought you might have some friends who would care to know your fate. Dan, take one of the lariats from the horses."

At this the fellow started and looked at Buffalo Bill in alarm.

"See here, you wouldn't hang a feller?"

"Why not?"

"I ain't done nothin', boss, to deserve it."

"You were caught spying on our camp, and tried your best to kill our friend."

"You're mistaken, mister. It was him as pounced on me and rolled me down the hill. I seen a light below here, and was curious to know what it came from, but before I could make out who ye were, this man started me rolling down hill."

"Well, I ask again, what's your name?"

"Peter Brown."

His manner told that he lied, but there was no way of proving it.

"What are you doing in the Bad Lands?"

"Trying to give the reds the slip. You see, I kept a small trading post up country, and when this ghost dance business got the Indians too much excited they cleaned me out. I only 'scaped by the skin o' my teeth, an' now I'm heading to find protection."

"Are you mounted?"

"I was, but a buck sent an arrow into my hoss, and I lost him later."

"What will you do now if we let you go?"

"Head straight for the agency. I've had enough of the tradin' business to last me."

"What do you say, boys—shall we let him go?"

"No use keepin' him," remarked Rusie.

"His life ain't worth takin'," said Dakota Dan, contemptuously.

The fellow did not look insulted, but grinned as though he took this as a compliment.

"Thank ye, gentlemen. I see my gun came down along with me. With your permission I'll vamoose the ranch."

"When you get to the agency let them know you ran across Buffalo Bill."

At the mention of the name the man showed renewed interest, and looked after the scout as he moved away.

He was aroused by Dan's rough voice:

"Come, I'll show ye out of camp, old chap."

About twenty minutes later the old ranger showed up again.

His first act was to scatter the brands of fire, tossing them into the little creek that ran close beside the camp.

"Hello! what's up?" asked Rusie.

"Danger in the air."

"From that fellow?"

"Not particularly, but I reckon as how thar be others near by."

Buffalo Bill heard this, and called out:

"Hello! there, Dan, what have you discovered?"

"I knowed that feller lied to us, but couldn't prove it, so I said nothing. It's my opinion he belongs to some gang o' cut-throats as hangs about the Indian reservation."

"I walked with him nearly a quarter o' a mile, an' then told him to go on."

"He muttered something about meeting me again, and then walked off in the dark."

"I stood there listening a little while, and heard the critter climbin' the bank below."

"On the way back, I could swar I caught the neigh of a hoss, an' it didn't come from this place neither, so I knowed the chap had lied."

"It's my 'pinion he has friends near by, an' that we'll see more of 'em before we leave."

"Shall we get out of this?" asked Rusie, fingering his Winchester.

"When the moon rises," returned Cody.

"I was jest thinkin'," put in Dan, "that it might be well for us to have the hosses up the canyon. Suppose two of us take 'em along. The other can stay here an' have a little fun if the critters show up."

"Not a bad idea. Let me be the one to remain. Wait for me some distance above, and I'll join you soon after moonrise."

Buffalo Bill's word was law, so Dan and Rusie led the horses slowly up the gulch and left the Prince of Prairiemen alone by the ruins of their late camp-fire.

Cody proceeded to start up the fire again, gathering some fresh fuel.

In a few minutes he had quite a cheery blaze, that would burn an hour or so without having fresh fuel cast upon it.

Next, he arranged several logs in such a way that from a little distance they had the appearance of human beings lying there asleep.

Then Buffalo Bill took up his station a short distance above the fire.

He did not mean to linger any longer than moon-up, as time was too precious to waste.

All at once his watchful eyes caught sight of a movement at the top of the bank, just above the camp-fire.

He made no move.

Looking carefully, he realized that several men were there, spying upon the scene below.

The others lingered, as though awaiting some sort of signal, as he supposed.

A whistle sounded from down the gulch.

More of the border rascals were there.

Those above had been holding themselves in readiness, and just now they poured in a volley.

The flash of their guns and the loud report combined to make it seem like a mimic battle, while to add to the scene, the dead grass along the edge of the gully caught fire, and began to blaze in several places.

Several men leaped into view, firing as they ran into the camp.

Among them was the fellow who called himself Peter.

By this time those who rushed forward had discovered the deception, and angry shouts were beginning to be heard when Cody sent in his first shot.

When he had created consternation among the men by the fire, he elevated his repeater and pumped a few bullets along back of the burning grass, where he could but catch glimpses of figures flitting about.

The men in the camp, realizing that they had fallen into an ambush, had shown astonishing and ludicrous haste in plunging out of sight.

Some dropped behind the logs, while others rushed into the rocky passages.

Only one remained behind.

He sat upon the ground hugging one of his legs, and whining—it was Peter himself thus brought low.

Leaving the scene he began to move up the canyon.

Looking back, the last glimpse he had of the scene showed him the fire running along the edge of the canyon, licking up the tufts of dry grass, and occasionally bursting out into a brilliant flame.

When he had gone some distance Buffalo Bill gave the signal agreed upon, and soon he had joined his companions.

Dakota Dan and Rusie had halted at a point where a little side ravine offered them a chance to reach the plain above.

They had heard much of what had occurred below, and were able to judge that it was just as the scout had planned.

Once the level plain was reached, each man threw himself into his saddle.

Surveying the situation, they could see the burning grass nearly half a mile to the south.

There was also a light in the east, where the moon was about to appear.

Once more Dan led the way.

They saw nothing more of Peter and his pards, so it could be set down as certain that they would make no attempt to follow.

By morning they had drawn near the place where the great chief Two-Strike had his village, so situated that an army could hardly have captured it.

Once or twice they discovered signs that indicated the presence of Indians.

Small bands of braves were continually passing between the village of Two-Strike and the camp of Bigfoot.

With rare good luck Dan had succeeded in making his advance undiscovered by any of these passing bands.

Morning was near at hand when they entered among bleak hills and secreted their horses at a place where there was not one chance in ten of the animals being discovered, since the bucks were too much taken up with rumors of a coming battle to do much prowling about.

"Where shall we go?" asked Cody.

"I know a place—a cave on the side of a hill—it runs back from the rear end—ye kin look into Two-Strike's place," returned the old prairie ranger.

"Good."

Dakota Dan's knowledge promised to prove valuable

to them, and Cody was quite willing to let him do the guiding.

He led them along tortuous paths, skirted deep chasms, crawled under dense bushes and through chapparals that hardly looked as though they could be pierced.

When they had kept this up for half an hour they reached a cleft in the rocks.

"Here's the b'ar-hole," said Dan.

"How did you ever find it?"

"Accident. An old coon, Grizzly Joe by name, and myself was huntin' around here one winter, when we chased a b'ar into this hole. We drawed lots to see who should go in. It fell to me. Well, I managed to kill the b'ar."

The Dakota scout did not hesitate, but immediately plunged into the opening, and his companions followed, keeping as close to him as they could.

Thus they went on for some time, and everything seemed working well, when Buffalo Bill, his hand upon Dan, felt his guide suddenly come to a halt.

"Great snakes!" ejaculated Dan, in a whisper.

"What is it?"

"Look ahead. I reckon some grizzly has taken up quarters in here again," and, looking, they saw the cause of his stopping.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PHANTOM ARROW.

The situation was grave.

From in front came a low but distinct growl, and they could see a pair of yellow eyes in the darkness.

"That critter must be killed. Can you put a bullet between his eyes?" asked Dan.

"Not in this darkness. I couldn't see the sights of my rifle," replied the scout.

"Oh, I can fix that, I reckon."

He took out a match, wet the end, and rubbed both the fore and hind sights of Bill's rifle.

The phosphorus made them plain.

By getting the two in a line with the eyes of the grizzly, it would be possible to make a shot with some chance of a fatal result.

The yellow orbs continued to gleam, but the growling had ceased.

"Looks to me more like a panther's eyes than those of a grizzly," said Cody.

"Jove! they're gone. You didn't shoot quick enough, Buffalo Bill," cried Rusie.

Sure enough, darkness had apparently swallowed up the yellow orbs.

"They'll show again soon, and I'll put a chunk of lead between 'em," said Buffalo Bill, coolly.

"The critter's advancing. All be ready to give him a dose. We'll pulverize him, dead sure," gritted Dan, bracing himself.

"The devil ye will," growled a voice near by. "Don't ye know a human critter yet when ye sees his eyes, Dan Tucker?"

"Bless my soul!" gasped the other.

"Come, have ye got yer weapons p'inted t'other way, so a feller kin look?" came in the same growling voice.

"It's old Grizzly Joe, as sure as I live."

"'Course it are. Who else would ye 'spect to find in this yar hole, Dan Tucker? Advance and give the countersign."

Cody drew a match along the leg of his corduroy trousers. As it flamed up he saw before him, crouching on the rocks, about as unique a specimen of an old prairie-man as one could meet with.

Old Grizzly was a weazened-up specimen, whose skin was as brown as an Indian's.

His buckskin garments, greasy and patched, hung on his frame much as an old suit might on a pole.

Such a man might excite laughter from his looks, but he was a person to be feared.

For long years he had braved the perils of the border, and his hand-to-hand conflicts with redskins, together with personal encounters with wild animals, would fill a book.

Every scar upon his body and face could tell a story.

Dakota Dan stepped forward and wrung the bony hand.

"See hyar, didn't I ketch one o' ye mention the name o' Buffle Bill?" demanded the other.

"Yes, he's here," replied the scout.

"It's been many a year sence we met, Bill, but I reckon as how ye're the same chap as of old."

"Right you are, pard."

"What brings you here, Dan Tucker?"

"Thereby hangs a tale," answered Dan, curious to

know why old Grizzly Joe had come to this hotbed of danger, but, as he had the first question in, must be answered.

The story was soon told.

"Now explain why you are here, Joe."

"P'raps because I've got a likin' for this hyar hole in the rocks."

"Don't believe it."

"Well, then, how would it strike ye if I sed as how I was on a scout for General Miles?"

"That would be nearer the mark, but, old man, I don't believe you've struck it yet."

At this Grizzly chuckled—they could hear his leath' garments actually rattle, as though a gust of wind was whipping clothes on a line.

"Dan Tucker, 'pears to me ye're gettin' all-fired suspicious of late; but I don't mind tellin' ye that I'm ut hyar on a mission to the dead."

"A mighty poor piece of business, then, for a man o' your age, Grizzly. Let the dead alone, man. What business have ye with the spirits of departed Sioux braves?"

"Thet's a story, too, Dan Tucker. I kin jest give ye an outline o' it now. A chief among these reds, known as Crow-That-Flies, died a year or so ago. Wrapped up in the buffle hide wid him was a paper that is of great value to a sartin leetle woman now in Deadwood City. I'm hyar to get that same paper, ye see, if I lose my scalp in the attempt."

He ended with a dry chuckle, as though what he said were quite a joke.

The old man had already lost his hair years before, and never neglected an opportunity to get off a fling at himself on this account.

Explanations had now been given on both sides.

The four continued along the dark passage, and soon reached what Dan had called the rear entrance to the cave.

This was merely a rift in the face of a cliff.

High up in the air, being at least sixty feet above the little valley, they had a splendid view of the Sioux village, while they themselves were unseen.

Buffalo Bill was surprised at its size, and said:

"Looks like three hundred lodges."

"All that, and more coming every hour, as the Indians break up their other villages. If the fight is put off a

er two weeks, Two-Strike will have a thousand braves
under his command," declared Dan, seriously.

Grizzly pointed out the portion where the dead were
posited.

Among many of the Indian tribes the body of a de-
serted brave is sewed up in his robe, often with his
weapons and the things associated with him.

Thus secured, the body is fastened on a scaffold or
platform some six feet from the ground.

Later on, when through age the scaffold falls, the
bones are collected and buried, all but the skull.

These form a mystic circle, in the center of which are
magic totems, left by the medicine men.

To this grim place daily came the squaws.

Seated upon the ground, they caress the sad remnants
of a husband or brother, singing songs, or holding an imag-
inary conversation with the object of their peculiar af-
fection.

All these things Buffalo Bill knew.

On his part, with his glass he was endeavoring to see
in which lodge Captain Andy was kept a prisoner by his
enemies.

Although he had no glimpse of the white man, he soon
learned where he was secured, because there was a guard
post before the lodge.

Twice had Buffalo Bill seen the big chief Two-Strike
in the village.

On one occasion he was seated upon a knoll, in the
distance. He seemed sad, or else in a serious state of mind.

The young men called for war, while the old ones coun-
seled peace.

"I wish I had a bow and arrow," said Buffalo Bill, to
himself, but aloud.

"Got plenty o' sich in hyar."

Hardly had Old Grizzly ceased speaking than he
brought the articles mentioned into view.

They examined them.

"Sioux make at that. Where is their owner?"

The skinny ranger shrugged his shoulders, and gave
the same peculiar laugh.

"As ther winds, Buffler Bill. I never seen him arter
went into ther river. He found this yer cave by acci-
dent, but he made a mistake."

Buffalo Bill had taken out paper and pencil.

He was busily making a series of characters upon the
diagonal sheet.

When done, he handed it to Old Grizzly.

"Read it."

The ranger did so without difficulty, proving the ac-
curacy of the writing, and his own proficiency in the art
of translating Indian signs.

Two-Strike—Chief—Medicine-man—your old friend, Buffalo
Bill, warns you not to be deceived by young fools. If you raise
the hatchet, the soldiers, who are as plentiful as the sand on the
seashore—you have seen them—will kill your tribe to a man.
Wait and see—Big Foot is a fool—let Two-Strike be wise.

BIG CHIEF BILL.

Having received back the missive, the soldier scout
wrapped it about the shaft of the arrow, securing it with
some thread.

Looking out again, he saw that Two-Strike still sat
upon the mound, not more than fifty yards from the base
of the cliff.

"Who is a good hand with these things?"

"Reckon I've larned as well as any red—spent twenty
years among 'em," said Grizzly.

"Can you drop that arrow near the chief, so that he
will notice it?"

"Sartin."

"Then do so, old man."

Grizzly took the bow and tried it several times, as
though to get accustomed to it.

There was no chance to stand out at the mouth of the
cave, even had he desired to do so, and, consequently, he
had to adopt different tactics.

Lying on his back, he pulled the arrow to the head sev-
eral times, and as often let it slip back again.

On the next occasion there was a twang, and the ar-
row was gone on its flight.

Three of them eagerly watched to see the result, as
well as their place of hiding would permit.

"His aim might be too true," remarked Dan.

"And pin the great chief to the ground. There'd be
the deuce to pay under such circum—"

"Great Caesar! he's done it!"

They could see an arrow sticking upright in the
ground, and it, to all appearances, had passed through
the recumbent Sioux.

"I reckon not," said Grizzly, coolly.

Buffalo Bill had his eyes to his glass.

"See, the old chief's sitting up. The arrow has en-
tered the ground between his legs."

Two-Strike was not only sitting up, but looking around

him with the most extravagant expression of surprise, as Cody could see by the aid of his glass.

The Sioux chief seemed to believe this arrow must have dropped from the sky.

If meant for his heart, it had come dangerously near. Whether it was luck or skill that had guided the shaft, Old Grizzly had put it just where he wanted it.

Presently Two-Strike saw the paper tied about the shaft of the arrow.

He recognized the Indian way of sending a message, and speedily pulled the arrow from its burial place in the earth.

"He's examining the head. Perhaps he may recognize the workmanship. It may seem like a shot from the spirit world. Now he cuts the thread—unwinds the paper."

Buffalo Bill ceased for a minute.

"There, he has finished. He looks around him again, as if half believing the arrow came from the clouds. Now he glances up the cliff—his eye is on this spot—it ranges along the top. I see him shake his head in despair. He takes the arrow in his hand and walks away; that is the lodge of the old medicine man he has gone to."

Turning to Old Grizzly, the scout continued:

"That was the best shot with an arrow I ever saw made, old man, and you can believe I've seen some in my time."

"'Twar a leetle thing. Spent ten years on the Amazon wid the natives. That's the way they put an arrer inter a turtle floatin' on ther water—become mighty good shots, I tell ye, boys."

Aside, Buffalo Bill said to Dan

"How old is your friend, anyhow?"

"Nigh 'bout a thousand, I reckon."

"I thought so, by the way he talks of having spent ten years here and twenty there."

"You ain't begun to hear him yet. I tried to count once. He's been among the Eskimos, in India, China, Persia, Egypt; down in Africa, sent to the mines of Siberia, fought in Italy, lived in France, met Bismarck in Berlin. Hang me if there's a country on the earth he ain't really seen. But I kinder reckon he exaggerates his stay a leetle, for ye see I counted three hundred and seventy years in all, and then gave up the job."

Buffalo Bill laughed as though he enjoyed the joke.

Old Grizzly was an original man, and no fool, either.

He had seen much of the world, and, after all, preferred the great prairies of the wild West to any stam ground.

A short time after the singular flight of the messenger arrow, the sun went down and night closed over the scene.

CHAPTER VIII.

AMONG THE LODGES.

The time came for action.

Acting on Dan's suggestion, they had been wise enough to bring with them the lariats belonging to the horses.

Dan busied himself in fastening them together, he had a single rope that would reach to the ground.

It was fastened among the rocks, and one in the crowd, single-handed, draw the others up in turn.

It fell upon Amos Rusie to be the one to stay in the cave.

A code of signals was arranged, and Old Grizzly went down the rope, while Buffalo Bill followed and last came Dakota Dan.

When the old prairie ranger reached solid ground below he found the scout ready and alone, for Grizzly had already gone off upon his strange business.

The two crept toward the village, for the hour was grown quite late; something like quiet had fallen upon the place, and then was the time to act, before the rise of the moon, as it was better fitted to their purpose.

Having carefully noted the position of the lodge which was supposed to contain the prisoner, they made for it.

Creeping along in the darkness of every lodge, they presently reached the one holding the prisoner.

Here they crouched to listen and take in the situation. Dan was the first to discover a guard, and he pointed him out.

Dan crept forward, as the guard dozed, quite unconscious of danger.

Why should he dream of it under such circumstances surrounded by hundreds of his comrades—an occasional glance into the tepee to assure himself that Captain A was there seemed to satisfy his sense of duty.

Dakota Dan crept up like a tiger, then a leap, a gurgling cry, a fall, and the thing was done.

ce those iron fingers clutched the throat of the
hed guard, he was helpless.

ffalo Bill hurried up, the thongs were ready, and the
n guard was bound and rendered perfectly helpless.
ey might have slain him just as easily, but Buffalo
was averse to it.

ch an act might be the cause of turning the great
Two-Strike against the whites—he was in a condi-
of mind when a small matter would decide the ques-
either way.

e lodge was now unguarded, and Buffalo Bill crept

found the place dimly lighted by a lantern hanging
the opening in the center, showing that the Sioux
borrowed some ideas from the whites in their rela-
with them.

man lay upon a pile of furs, and the scout recog-
his old friend Captain Andy Blake.
ndy, I've come to get you out of this."

Buffalo Bill!" gasped the prisoner. "Did you drop
the skies?"

ot quite, though I came down from above; but this
place for talk—come with me."

en Cody added:

ake the guard's gun; or, if you wish, I'll enter a
and secure weapons."

un no extra risk, I beg."

et me go," said Dakota Dan.

ing familiar with all the customs of the Sioux, he
s just where to look to find weapons.

hile he was inside a squaw passed close by, and they
to crouch very low and hold their breath.

id you notice her?" whispered Blake.

ot particularly—why?"

hat woman was once my wife, but now a squaw
Two-Strike."

white woman?"

es—the mother of my child. She hates me now like
on, because I am determined the child shall be
ght up a civilized being."

only hope she won't enter the prison lodge to talk
you."

fear the worst—she is my evil genius," returned
ain Andy.

e white squaw changed her course before reaching

the prison lodge, and went toward the large structure of
the head chief.

It had been a close call.

Meanwhile Dakota Dan was having an adventure of
his own in the lodge which he had entered for the pur-
pose of securing arms.

In groping about he had managed to arouse the
sleeper.

In an instant he had thrown himself upon the recumb-
ent and half-aroused brave, choking back the cry that
arose to his lips.

Mercy was not entering into Dan's mind just then—
self-preservation was always the first law of nature with
him.

Weaker grew the unfortunate victim's struggles until
finally he lay there limp and lifeless.

Dakota Dan arose, breathing hard after his severe ex-
ertion, groped around, secured a revolver and ammuni-
tion, after which he once more made his way outside.

When Dan crawled out of the lodge he handed the
weapon he had secured over to Captain Blake.

The soldier grasped the revolver with an eagerness he
could not disguise—it seemed like an old friend to him,
and he felt more like himself when thus armed.

Creeping along among the lodges, they finally reached
the outskirts of the village, which did not extend to the
cliff, because large and small stones covered the ground.

Among these the three intruders picked their way, and
reached the rock wall, discovered the rope, a signal was
made, and Buffalo Bill went up first.

When the rope came down Captain Blake took a
turn—he, too, was landed in the cleft above.

A loop had been made in the rope, and this served as a
seat—one hand held the body firm, while the other was
used to keep him from too violent contact with the rough
face of the wall. Dakota Dan was soon dangling in
mid-air, but just then a wild cry arose from the village.

Old Grizzly had not yet arrived, and perhaps he might
be held accountable for the tumult.

In a short space of time the greatest confusion existed
in among the lodges—deafening shouts rang out, fires
started into new life, and one could almost believe the
place was being attacked by a numerous enemy.

To fully understand how this came about it will be
necessary to go back and follow the old ranger, Grizzly
Joe, in his queer pilgrimage.

He made a bee line in the direction of the Indian burial ground, and was soon in the midst of the relics of the dead.

Around him were the platforms on which the bodies of the dead lay, some of them in good condition.

Some men would have been at a loss to tell which of these held the bones of the chief, but Old Grizzly was well versed in the ways of these people.

He knew there were certain marks on the poles supporting the platforms, by means of which the Indians identified the remains. Besides, Old Grizzly had already received something of a clew regarding the location of the one which he desired to find.

Old Grizzly was soon convinced he had found the one he wanted.

Listening for a moment, he climbed the nearest pole and reached the platform.

Already the supports were weakening, and the affair tottered under his weight, as though it would not take much to bring it down.

The body had passed away, so that there was nothing save the bones within the buffalo skin.

When the ranger used his knife and ripped the tough hide open, he found a skeleton figure ensconced within.

Some weapons had been wrapped up with the body—these he tossed aside, seeking to find a paper.

Success crowned his efforts, and with a low exclamation of pleasure, he hastened to hide the precious document in his bosom, just as voices sounded near by.

The speakers were advancing into the graveyard, and in a hurried manner.

Old Grizzly crouched low, for well he knew that unless he flattened himself out he would be discovered, as his form would be outlined against the heavens to any one below.

The words they spoke reached him—two braves they seemed to be, and one was telling in excited tones how, when wandering about, suffering from sleeplessness, he had seen a white man, or his spirit, enter among the sacred circles of the skulls.

Quickly he had hastened to find his brother, so that they might work a charm to chase the intruder away.

Old Grizzly recognized the fact that the young brave's companion was the weird medicine man of the tribe.

Old Grizzly began to realize that discovery was imminent, when he learned that while the medicine man was

going through some mummary at the foot of a platform the young buck shinned up the poles to see whether the paleface devil had been at any mischief there.

What should be his course of action in case the buck pushed his head above the edge of the platform, and looked into his eyes?

There was nothing left but to clutch him by the throat and trust to circumstances to prevent the alarm being given.

He hoped for a chance to drop down and sneak away, but the two searchers moved toward him.

Then the medicine man began his incantation again with the purpose of rendering the white spirit powerless in case it happened to be resting above.

The flimsy structure trembled in a manner that proclaimed its weakness—the buck was ascending.

His hands grasped the platform just in front of the ranger's face.

Another second and he had thrown a wiry leg up and cured a hold, and swung himself over the edge.

This toppled him over upon the concealed white spirit whose presence he discovered when it was too late to avoid it.

Old Grizzly had made his calculations, and he clutched the young buck around the neck in a grasp that shut out his wind.

If he could not shout, he could kick like a steer calf in a hedge, and so violent were his contortions that the rotten supports of the burial platform, unable to resist the motion, gave way, precipitating Old Grizzly, buck, and the mortal remains of the dead chief full of the wondering medicine man below.

CHAPTER IX.

AGAINST TERRIBLE ODDS.

This was more than the old ranger had calculated and he was hardly prepared to meet it.

The medicine man chanced to be in a position to witness the fall of the white man, at his own expense.

Such a rattling of bones and broken timbers had never occurred for many a day within the confines of the village.

Grizzly rolled over several times, and then, upon turning his feet, sneaked away; but the alarm had been com-

The medicine man gave a shout wild enough to have
ed the dead.

aves bounded from their lodges, giving tongue, fires
g up as fresh fuel was tossed upon them, and in a
te all was life and bustle where before had been
he and darkness.

be old-time prairie ranger had meanwhile scurried
in the direction of the cliff.

and fortune attended him in so far that he turned
ght way after reaching the wall of stone that rose
as than a pistol-shot above the plateau where Two-
re's village was located.

ely he had reached the spot which he had mentally
ed after making his descent, but there was no sign
e lariat there.

etween the star-decked heavens and himself he
d a swinging figure, that must be one of his com-
up is, and the rope would soon be free and lowered to

e the village the uproar had become fearful, for it
la discovered that other damage had been done besides
ver which the medicine man was so concerned.

lut condition of the guard at the prison lodge had
shu ound out, and also the fact that the late captive was

ca n the work of Dakota Dan in the lodge where he
cha cured his weapons would add another cause for
o ment.

ly Grizzly thought several times he would be discov-
all for parties of braves rushed this way and that,
seeking traces of the daring intruders who had in-
the sacred precincts of Two-Strike's village and
such confusion.

le figuring over the situation thus, Grizzly Joe
ed a sudden rap on the head.
ave him a start.

late ascending, the rope had been whipped from side to
to nd given him this sudden slap.

reached out his hand, groping for it.

ha n it came against his face.

thought it, and pulling gently, caused the loop to
l enough for him to push his body through, and
one the signal.

en cond later his feet left the ground and the old
and himself dangling in mid-air.

Then came a period of bright light, as the fires caught
hold of fresh fuel.

Those above realized that the danger of discovery was
greater during this time, and they therefore allowed him
to hang motionless.

He could see the inmates of the village gathering in a
crowd at the prison lodge, where some one was harangu-
ing them—it was the badly-demoralized medicine man,
whose bones were sore after his rough experience in the
place of skulls.

Attention being almost wholly taken up with what was
occurring in the village, the chances of his discovery
were lessened.

The light died down, and Grizzly shook the rope.

Again he began to move upward—another seven or
eight yards had been passed over when a sudden blaze of
light caused a second performance of the same nature.

A third halt brought the ranger to the cavern—he
tumbled over the edge, slipped the rope from his body,
and then chuckled audibly as though his success induced
merriment.

They were now ready to retreat, but one difficulty
stared them in the face.

Three horses could not very well carry five men—Griz-
zly had come with a horse, but it had wandered off, and
just as likely fallen into the hands of some Indian brave.

It seemed necessary, then, that they should in some
manner secure several more mounts, and Dakota Dan
suggested a plan.

Although Two-Strike and his braves owned half a
thousand horses, there were not over fifty in the village
at a time, and this signified that the Indians had a corral
near by.

Dan knew where it lay, and proposed making a call
upon it and securing all the mounts they needed.

They left the cavern that had served them so well, and
under the guidance of Dakota Dan sought the corral of
Two-Strike, which lay just around the cliff.

Through the village it could be easily reached, and at
the other side was a narrow passage that the Indians al-
ways kept heavily guarded.

Creeping over the masses of rock they finally reached
a spot where the valley lay below them.

Here the lariats came into play, the rope being
doubled, passed over a spur of rock, and both ends al-
lowed to drop.

When all of them had descended, the last one drew upon one end, and presently had the whole rope in his possession.

They were now in the corral, for the whole of the little valley was used as such.

To secure a number of the horses was the next thing on the programme, after which they must make a bold dash through the passage, taking the fire of the guards and giving in return.

Old Grizzly and Dan volunteered to do the work of securing the animals.

The regular Indian ponies would not allow the whites near them, galloping away with snorts of alarm; but it happened that there were a number of horses recently captured, and which still wore the halters, and to these the two prairie men turned their full attention.

As a general thing, the red man of the plains cares more for his horse than he does for his squaw—it is easier to be mated again than secure a new mount.

Their long experience told them that the chances were they would meet with trouble.

It would seem like a hard job to secure the horses in the darkness, but at the same time this promised to aid them in other respects.

"Keep yer eyes peeled, boys," whispered Old Grizzly, as they drew near a group of animals, which could just be distinguished.

The racket at the village appeared to have had some influence on the horses, for they were snorting and prancing around.

"See anything suspicious yet?" asked Dan.

"Over yonder—a brave moving—I kin see ther critter, he's coming this way. Keep quiet."

Old Grizzly laid his gun on the ground, and Dan knew what would follow.

Grizzly seemed to crouch lower and lower as the Indian's form drew nearer.

The form of the horse-guard loomed up against the sky.

The form of the old prairie ranger rose, two hands closed about the guard's neck, choking back the half-uttered cry of alarm, and he is on his back, with Old Grizzly over him.

Dakota Dan remembers that there is a likelihood of this horse-guard having a companion, and perhaps the

shout which Grizzly partly succeeded in shutting may draw him to the spot.

Close beside him he hears the sounds that indicate a desperate struggle, for the horse-guard, although by surprise, fights like a tiger cat.

Dan sweeps a glance around.

At first he sees nothing.

If the Indian's comrade comes at all it will be from a certain quarter, and realizing this, Dan does double in that direction.

Some object moves, but Dan cannot hear his footstep; this he does not expect, as the noise still continues from the village, and, besides, the horses seem to be more fully aroused than ever.

He bides his time, meanwhile holding a finger on the trigger of his gun, for he means to make a snap that will bring down game.

The head of an Indian is outlined against the sky toward the end of the valley where the distant crows are below.

The Indian suspected something was wrong, his keen ears perhaps caught the moan that announced the death of Grizzly's prey.

A blaze of fire flashed in his face, a report came through the valley, and the horse-guard went down.

Grizzly had long since discovered the fact that a number of Indians watched over the gate at the end of the valley, and might interfere with their departure. It was likely they had nothing more to worry about in securing the horses.

They succeeded in capturing a couple of very fine horses without much trouble, and their success aroused a desire to do more.

After bursting out of the valley they might find an opportunity to secure their own steeds, so they would need mounts.

Finally the fifth steed was lassoed, and the order to mount and prepare for action.

"This way," said Dan, quietly, as he led them in the direction of the outlet.

On either hand frowned the great walls, reaching most perpendicularly upward, while in front lay the passage.

The guards must be on the alert, for the racket kept up at the village would certainly tell them something was wrong.

barrier loomed up before them in the form of a gate, closing the entire passage from side to side, and Dan sprang from his horse.

He reached the gate, and they heard him unfasten it. The darkness was intense, and it saved his life, for there came a series of bright flashes from the side of the gate, accompanied by the report of firearms.

Around the daring ranger flew the bullets, for he had given the signal before moving the gate, such as a Sioux brave was required to utter, hence he had not fired upon.

Scarcely had the red guards poured in their volley than nearly Winchester's of the four whites began to play. As the flashes from the guns had betrayed the hiding-places of the guards, the whites were able to shoot with great accuracy.

At this time Dan, dragging open the heavy gate, stepped to where they awaited his coming, sprang upon the back of his steed, and led the way through with a flourish.

The single shot was fired after them, showing that not a single guard remained.

A bullet whistled by Buffalo Bill's ear.

"Too familiar, by half," he exclaimed, having felt the effect caused by the speeding lead.

Their progress could not be rapid in such a dark place, and the obstacles barred the way, and a stumble on the part of a horse might mean a broken leg.

After a due course of time they reached the place where the three horses had been left, and to find them safe was indeed a big piece of luck.

When they were off in flight.

CHAPTER X.

A RUNNING FIGHT.

Behind their rear the daring men of the plains could hear the sounds of discord, and it was a sure thing that the Sioux would soon be whirling madly after them.

They were in good spirits, for success had attended their flight; but at the same time they knew this was not the

way as they sped, making detours to avoid gulches, deciding some because it was easier traveling.

Their horses were a disappointment, however, for

though in the start they had done well, none of them held out as did the three under saddle.

If the Indians had taken up the chase in the proper spirit they would be sure to overtake them long before they reached the agency, or even the military camp.

Perhaps they might run across another gang of Indians who were tremendously excited by the long-continued ghost dances.

Then again there was some chance of meeting a company of soldiers on their way to General Forsyth's camp.

Dakota Dan discovered the first sign of human presence as it grew light.

Far off to the east a smoke was rising above some rocks and scrubby trees, indicating that a camp lay there.

As it was not at all in their line of march, they gave it a wide berth.

Suddenly Old Grizzly discovered pursuers.

Sure enough, when they arose on a small swell, he was found to be right.

Helter skelter came a band of braves after them.

Their manner was indicative of warfare—they brandished their guns, and the fresh morning breeze carried their shouts plainly over the intervening distance to the fugitives.

It was no use endeavoring to escape by flight.

The saddle horses, even after all they had gone through, with poor feed, were much the superior of the captured animals, and could have outrun them now.

Nearer came the reds.

They carried on like mad creatures.

Perhaps they hoped to alarm the fugitives; but if so they must have forgotten that these men were all old campaigners.

Each man looked at his gun.

Upon these weapons their lives would soon depend, and it was therefore advisable that they should keep them in good order.

Buffalo Bill turned several times in the saddle, but it was to count the racing reds, and size them up generally.

He also surveyed the ground ahead, looking for a suitable place to pull up.

"Where shall we have it out, pard?" he asked of Dan.

"I was just thinking. See that rock ahead. We can gather around it, horses in front, and give the red critters particular blazes."

"To the rock it is. One more spurt, and we're there." "Come boys."

His words inspired them.

Sweeping along, they soon reached the lone rock, and then came the order:

"Dismount—and ready to fire!"

Each man threw himself to the ground and made use of his horse as a screen, over which appeared the grim barrel of a rifle.

When the pursuing Brule braves saw the situation of affairs, they adopted a system of tactics in vogue for many years upon the prairie, dropping out of sight behind their horses and riding in a circle around the enemy at bay.

There were four guns among the fugitives that could send out fifteen bullets each without trouble, and that almost as fast as a man could pull trigger.

"Horse, then rider!" called Buffalo Bill, and he opened the ball himself.

The sharp report of his rifle rang out, and was immediately followed by a second shot, as for a second the dismounted brave was sighted.

He dropped into the grass, nor was he seen to move again by any one.

Shots sounded thick and fast, but all were not deadly.

But enough was accomplished to strike consternation to the hearts of the redskins.

The Indians kept firing, too, but owing to the fact that their wild horses were running they sent their lead rather wild.

One bullet, however, struck a horse, and he let his heels fly like a vicious thunderbolt, striking a second steed, and creating almost a panic among them.

The Indians dared not charge, for the chances were, sudden death would overtake them.

As several of their number had gone down already, they saw little chance of success.

Buffalo Bill, finding it next to impossible to shoot with justice to himself, fastened his horse to the adjoining one, and, springing out of the line, threw himself on the ground.

Here he was just as safe from the bullets, and could do some fine sharpshooting.

The Indians soon drew off to consult.

Even here Cody elevated the sights of his rifle and sent several balls among them, that once more caused a hasty retreat.

The scout swung himself into the saddle, and his companions also mounted.

When they started on again, the Indians began to follow.

"Ain't they pressing us?" asked Dan.

Buffalo Bill looked back and suddenly wheeled his horse—his rifle sounded.

The Sioux braves tried to drop forward on horses' necks, but the lead was too speedy, and only seemed to drop.

"That'll teach 'em a lesson," said Dan, with an angry glance at his chum's Winchester, with which Buffalo Bill made such wonder-shots.

The reds did fall back again in some confusion, sending a shower of bullets after those they hated and feared, which, being fired at random, did no damage at all.

"I see their game—they mean to hang on until something occurs—if another gang makes their appearance they'll join forces."

"I'm gwine ter give 'em a dose," declared Cody, who had watched Buffalo Bill's work with some wonder and envy.

Presently he lay down on his horse as if he had been wounded, knowing that the keen eyes of the reds would note this fact.

"Pass close by that clump o' sage grass," said Dan.

He dropped into the grass, rifle in hand, leaving doubled-up blankets on his horse's back to take the place of his own figure.

They rode on.

Suspecting nothing the Sioux braves came galloping forward, watching those ahead only with the desire to drop upon their horses' necks in case the man with the long-reaching gun wheeled again.

Old Grizzly crouched there in ambush, chuckling to see the whole dozen reds bearing down on him.

It really looked as though they must soon ride through the sage grass, or at least pass it by.

A puff of smoke shot out from the clump, before the report reached them a second puff was served, quickly followed by a third and fourth.

Old Grizzly was doing his level best.

The Indians were confused at first, but, as if

ding the state of affairs, now made a grand rush for clump of grass, firing as they dashed forward.

Back to old Joe's assistance," was the cry that ed from the lips of Buffalo Bill.

Grizzly's life depended on their arrival in time, he ld have a poor show, for the reds were very close, determined for revenge.

Old Grizzly kept pouring in his shots, and Indians horses were falling.

was hardly in the power of human bravery to ad this, for, although the remnant of the reds had ost reached the clump, the presence of the four tes thundering down upon them took away their remnant of courage.

firing one volley into the grass they turned and ed helter-skelter over the plain, separating as they t.

s they suspected, the four riders flew after them, several more horses were tumbled over by the d-riding sharpshooters.

s they returned to the clump of dead grass, they rd a savage yell, followed by a shot.

Old Joe was seated upon the ground laughing as if ut to split his sides. In one hand he held a revol- from the muzzle of which the blue smoke was yet ng.

bout ten feet away a Sioux brave lay on his stom- groaning, grasping a knife in one hand and old s dandy wig in the other.

hat brave had never seen a wig before, and he must e been badly shaken up when, being about to scalp supposed hunter, the whole affair came off in his

le. e had used his revolver before the brave could re- er from his astonishment.

Grizzly had been struck three times by flying lead, the only serious wound was one in the head, that cked him silly for a brief space of time, otherwise g slight.

e mounted the last led horse, as his own had gone oping away at the time the four men turned to ve to his assistance.

way they went, leaving Grizzly's ambush far be- . If the reds chose to look after their wounded e were at liberty to do so.

This is like old times," declared Cody, as he pushed

more cartridges into his pet gun; "and if we keep on, the war will have begun in earnest. But," he contin- ued, casting a sober look ahead, in the direction where the camp lay, "I'm anxious to know how matters are progressing over yonder."

"I heard a noise a while back—it might have been thunder, and then again, you know thar's a chance of cannon firing. The troops have guns and rifled can- non," said Dan.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MILITARY CAMP.

The agency was far away on the one hand, and the military camp closer on the other.

It had been put to the vote which course they should pursue, and unanimously they had decided in favor of the latter.

If there was to be an Indian battle, they desired above all things to see it.

About an hour after leaving the demoralized reds be- hind, they sighted a small party ahead.

Buffalo Bill used his glass, and it revealed the fact that they were two old warriors and a white man.

The latter was singularly dressed and looked like a ghost from the tomb.

When the scout had surveyed the trio in astonish- ment, he handed the glass to Dan, with the remark:

"Dan, what does that mean?"

The other looked and shook his head.

"Blest if I know. Looks like a chap at a masquerade. The feller's rigged out for something though. Here, Captain Andy, take a squint. You've been among the reds. Do you understand the meaning of that critter's togs?"

As soon as the other had glanced through the glass, he said:

"Yes, I know."

"What is it?"

"The reds have been having ghost dances—that man is the ghost. He plays the part of the Messiah, and is now the main cause of all this trouble."

Dan uttered a cry.

"You remember what I was telling you, Chief Cody? That must be Jack Horner."

"We want him," said Buffalo Bill, firmly.

The others were ahead of them, and would come in their way while they advanced toward the fighting camp.

Then, again, it was discovered that they were mounted on old lame horses that could not go much faster than a walk—at least, that was the impression they received.

Instead of aiming directly for them, Buffalo Bill led his men a little to one side, as though he would pass by, but when at the nearest point, about three hundred yards, they suddenly turned their horses and headed for the trio.

To the surprise of the party, the ghost left his two Indian guards.

His horse seemed all right, and was a milk white one, peculiarly suited to the part he was playing.

As soon as the animal sprang away they could see that it was fresh and fleet.

Mounted upon such a beast he could bid them defiance, for their horses were tired.

Buffalo Bill realized that if he wanted to put an end to this man's evil practice some other system must be inaugurated.

"It must be done, though I hate awfully to drop that animal."

As he spoke, he drew his own horse in so that it remained stationary, and his gun was raised.

The two old Indians set up a shout of warning, which their comrade heeded by throwing himself forward in the saddle.

The puff of smoke had hardly come from Buffalo Bill's Winchester than the white horse was seen to suddenly stop in its mad career and roll over.

Its rider was thrown forward and fell in a heap.

"It would be a mercy if his neck were broken, the varmint," declared Dan, as they rode forward to where the man lay.

He sprang to his feet, however, and would have tried to run, but Buffalo Bill roared out:

"Try it, Jack Horner, and you're a dead man."

He recognized the tone of authority, and cried:

"Don't shoot!" raising his arms above his head.

He was badly scared, and called out:

"You, Buffalo Bill?"

"Exactly, and it's a pity, as Dan Tucker here says, that I didn't nail you up with your ears at that time, Horner."

"What for?" he asked, tremblingly.

"It might have saved many lives. You've been the cause of all this Indian trouble, setting the reds against Uncle Sam's boys. Perhaps they'll hang you for it if more lives are lost."

How to get him to camp was a question, but finally he was mounted with Captain Andy on the strongest of the five, while the two old braves had pounded the lame horses into something of a run, and were in a good time over the prairie.

Fearing lest some trouble might be caused by the appearance of Horner in their midst, Buffalo Bill took the looks of the man as much as possible, and fastened a blanket around him.

This man, being the main cause of the difficulty, in persuading the Indians to come to terms, the sooner he was put out of the way the better.

"I hear no cannon," remarked the scout who was galloping over soft ground.

"That's a good sign—the battle has not yet been fought," declared Dan.

"I'm sure of that, for we'd have run across their pickets out here, making for the villages. Besides, the firing would have reached our ears long before now."

"In ten minutes we'll look on the scene."

They began to grow a little anxious; a rise of smoke lay before them, and beyond this was the camp.

The smoke of numerous camp-fires could be seen rising in the air.

Besides, a hum reached their ears, indicating the presence of hundreds of human beings.

Pickets could be seen stationed on the tops of hills—these proved the presence of soldiers beyond.

Urging their wearied horses on, they finally rode down upon the camps of the reds and whites.

There was the great camp of Big Foot, with scores of lodges, teeming with braves.

Near by was the military camp of the United States soldiers, their white tents standing out with a result no Indian could understand.

Here and there were squads of cavalry, and on the hills were stationed the light batteries used upon the plains.

From the proud and insolent bearing of the Indian was to be feared that their eyes were blinded by the recent demonstrations through which they had passed.

Under the religious excitement, the bucks could be said to be almost gone crazy.

Just in front of a light cannon were several men.

These latter looked around, and one of them recognized a soldier-scout.

"It's Buffalo Bill," he said, aloud.

At this intelligence his comrades looked with new interest at the party.

"How does the land lie, comrade?" asked Cody, advancing a little.

"Going to be trouble immediately. The reds are like a swarm of bees swarming. See 'em rush from one point to another. We are ready to open on 'em with this little gun," returned the trooper, fondly handling the gun.

"I see. They are searching the lodges for arms."

"Those are Lieutenant Taylor's Indian scouts."

"Big Foot and his men will never stand that."

"We reckoned on it. If they open the affair it will be a screecher. Look at 'em following the Indian police from lodge to lodge. Ain't that a sight to remember, huh?"

Far and near stretched the great camp of the Sioux, and the majority of the bucks were gathered in this one location.

Their numbers made them brave.

Threatening words were addressed to the red policemen, who went about their work without paying any attention to the crowd.

They knew as well as any one that they were standing over a powder magazine, and that it only needed a spark to cause an explosion; but, confident of their backing, these sons of the plains went about their work without fear.

It would not last long.

There was danger in the air.

"Watch! we shall see something, boys. There goes the shot. Now for the roar of battle."

It was even as Buffalo Bill said.

The moment of action had arrived.

CHAPTER XII.

IN DEADLY CONFLICT.

One foolish buck brought on the battle.

Influenced by his experience in the ghost dance, this Sioux brave, upon seeing his lodge invaded, threw dissolution to the winds.

Leveling his gun, he shot a scout down in his tracks, regardless of consequences.

That was the signal the Indians had been waiting for.

They outnumbered the soldiers two to one, and many of them had been with Sitting Bull during the memorable campaigns that ended with the massacre of General Custer and his command.

Perhaps they were foolish enough to believe that this might be another Little Big Horn affair.

One thing they forgot.

These troops were better armed than the men of Custer's time, and, besides, they were backed up by the death-dealing batteries on the hill.

Hardly had the shot rang out that announced the killing of the scout in the discharge of his duty, than the Sioux braves sprang to arms.

Many produced guns from under their blankets, while others snatched them from places where they had been concealed.

They opened a hot fire upon the soldiers, and many dropped from their horses.

Still not a shot was sent in return until the order was given.

Then came a dreadful crash of guns, and a score or two of Indians went down.

Troopers charged here and there, waving bloody sabres and using their six-shooters, while redskin braves swarmed around them in numbers that threatened to overwhelm the military.

Another sound now joined issue with the carnival of battle—the roar of the cannon on the hillside and the scream of the shells through the air, followed by the awful execution they accomplished when they struck.

The Indians were so mixed up with the troopers that, as a general rule, the cannoneers dared not fire into their midst.

Whenever they saw an isolated group or squad of Sioux braves, either retreating or hurrying to the assistance of their comrades, the guns were turned upon them with terrible effect.

"Shall we go down?" asked Buffalo Bill, whose fighting blood was aroused.

"Reckon we'll have all we want to attend to here," replied Dan, significantly.

The others quickly saw what he meant.

Red skirmishers were making their way up the hill—

side. They had conceived the idea of taking the guns and turning them on the soldiers.

Could this be done, the soldiers would be treated to a dose of their own medicine.

"Dismount—take the horses back. Tie up that man so we can find him."

These were the orders of Buffalo Bill.

The Indians came up the hill like so many tigers, springing from tree to tree.

It was of little avail to turn the gun upon them, since they were so scattered.

No doubt the redskins would have killed the gunners and captured the gun had it rested with those in charge, who were not armed to resist such an attack, or strong enough.

The determined braves could be seen clambering along the hillside like so many cats, clinging to roots of trees, making use of logs for protection, and all the while drawing closer to the spot where the coveted gun had been placed.

During this period the confusion in the valley had been fearful.

The troopers kept together as much as possible, and used their weapons with deadly effect.

In the excitement of the battle a number of squaws were shot, but this was hardly to be wondered at, since they looked so like braves, and bullets were flying everywhere in a leaden hail.

In some places the reds managed to get a small squad of cavalymen isolated from their fellows, and, although the latter fought bravely, they were forced to succumb to superior numbers.

Thus a gallant officer and his immediate command met death.

Again, there was a possibility that this engagement would be the signal for such an Indian war as had never been known along the border, for the conditions of the redskins warranted the belief that they were crazed with excitement.

"Hyar they come," said Old Grizzly.

"Fire!" cried Buffalo Bill.

So the rifles began to sound, and those who aimed them were accustomed to making their bullets count.

Here a brave dropped in his tracks.

In another quarter a wounded man limped away, satisfied with his share of the fight.

Some warriors, however, were not so easily disposed of.

Wounded, they continued to crawl up the side of the hill, their glaring eyes fastened upon the group of men above, their every faculty bent upon reaching them before death came.

Bullets began to hum around the ears of the first

Each man threw himself flat on the ground, and execution accomplished served to warn the Indians they would have to be more cautious.

They were scrambling up in every direction, to capture the gun—coming closer, like the folds of a conda tightening around the body of its victim.

All the while their number was being gradually lessened by the hot fire of the men above.

The gunners dared not use the gun, because of the death to stand up beside it.

Thus it stood idle, when it might have been leading leaden messengers among the crowd of braves in the valley.

Evidently the crisis was near.

A number of Indians had gathered near by, and were waiting to make a rush.

When they swooped down the decisive part of the engagement would be settled.

Buffalo Bill changed his position and ordered the men to do likewise, seeking what shelter they could find.

Then they waited.

The silence immediately around them grew more and more tense; but from the valley arose the awful din of a dozen sounds mingled in one.

Already the troopers had turned the tide—their positions were wavering, still fighting with a desperation bordering on despair, but almost ready to turn before their enemies.

"Here they come!" Cody shouted.

An Indian seemed to arise from behind every rock. Their number surprised even the scout, but did not dismay him, and he and his comrades opened fire.

At a time like this each second counted.

His comrades were not backward, either.

Each man worked the lever of his gun for all he was worth, until the very barrels grew heated.

Such a scorching fire was poured upon them that it seemed to wither the redskins.

Wavering, they came to a halt, but the fire kept on.

First one man turned and ran yelling from the hill, and his example was contagious, for others joined him until the whole of them were bounding like so many mountain sheep, jumping from one rock to another on the hillside.

Bullets whistled past their ears and knocked chips from the rocks. The whites above were shooting to scatter and not to kill.

"That work was well done," said Buffalo Bill.

He watched the scene in the valley for a minute or two with deep interest.

troopers were charging again and again upon the
of Indians.

their sabres glittered as they cleft the air, and some,
ang the bridle between their teeth, grasped a weapon
her hand, plunging into the thick of the fray.

was a sight to inspire a battle painter.

very one of those who gazed felt their nerves quiver
excitement.

the men in charge of the gun had regained possession

the dare-devil of an Indian had fallen across the gun,
his lifeblood stained the many-chambered barrel.

they cast him aside, and made ready to pour another
er of lead among the masses of braves in the valley.
ffalo Bill stayed them.

"Don't shoot at retreating foes—they've had enough."
is words were tempered with mercy, and the men
ed him.

ready the creek was running red with blood. The
ghter had been terrible on both sides, for their worst
ons were aroused, and they shot to kill.

ldiers, braves and squaws lay in heaps among the
ps and on the level ground.

small groups there were where men still fought hand
and, with all the fury of demons urging them on.

"Remember Custer!" arose in a shout now and again
the din of battle.

aster's regiment, the Seventh, was there, but few
in it who had fought under the guidance of the
w-haired chieftain.

Will they revered his name, and as they faced these
y fiends, many of whom had had a hand in that
ghter on the fatal Little Big Horn, that battle-shout
ed their arms, and was the last sound many a
ched buck ever heard on earth.

ready the fight was really won.

the troopers had aroused a feeling of fear in the
ts of the Indians, who had believed they could not
the battle. Their medicine men had long been tell-
them that all they had to do was to try, and they
d wipe out the palefaces.

ow they realized that this had been false—that de-
had been put upon them, and they were in a position
vite annihilation.

made them desperate.

me fled.

thers seemed grimly resolved to die, and to do all
amage they could before going under.

ithin another half hour the Indians were in a panic
the battle had been won.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

And now everything that could be done was being ac-
complished for the wounded.

The roll was called, and every missing man accounted
for, either lying dead upon the field of battle, or else
wounded, in the temporary hospital that had been hastily
arranged, so that the surgeons could get in their work.

This was a good record for the blue jackets.

Not a man shirked his duty.

Their wounds were generally in front—the kind true
soldiers are proud of.

Buffalo Bill and his Best Bower, as he called Dan, be-
cause the other seemed a second right arm to him in time
of need, made up their minds not to accompany the
soldiers back to the post.

Captain Andy Blake determined to get beyond the
reach of the venomous chieftain, Two-Strike, and his
white squaw, once the captain's wife.

He decided to secure his child and bury himself in
Mexico, where he could be happy with his own, and bury
the grim past.

As for Old Grizzly, he chuckled when bidding the
famous soldier-scout farewell, making one movement
toward his breast, to indicate that he kept the precious
paper there, and then tapping his head, to make Cody
smile again as he remembered that ludicrous scene where
the dying Indian was holding up the old man's wig with
an expression of horror on his face.

Thus they parted.

The Indian war began and ended with that one fierce
battle.

Had Two-Strike determined to go in, he must have
dragged many other tribes with him, and, as a conse-
quence, create terrible havoc along the whole frontier.

The "Phantom Arrow" from the sky, bearing the mes-
sage of warning to Two-Strike from Buffalo Bill, de-
cided the great red chieftain on the side of peace, as later
he confessed to the scout when they met.

Buffalo Bill had once been to him as a brother, and the
Sioux chief had the greatest respect for the scout.

At any rate, something influenced him at the time
when he only needed a turn to make him either for war
or peace.

The Phantom Arrow pointed to peace, and the white
renegade, Jack Horner, who had played the ghost and so
deceived them, the Indians afterward spirited away to
meet a mysterious and unknown doom—unknown save
to the medicine men of the Sioux.

THE END.

Next week's BUFFALO BILL STORIES (No. 8) will con-
tain "Buffalo Bill's Prairie Police; or, The Decoy of
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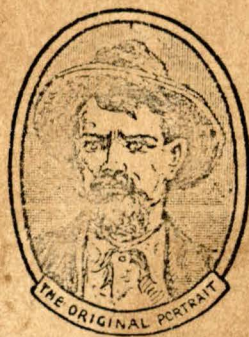
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